

REGULATION OF PRIVIES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

JANUARY 15, 1897.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CURTIS, of Iowa, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 9142.]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 9142) to regulate privies in the District of Columbia, having had the same under consideration, recommend that the same do pass with the following amendments, submitted by the health department of the District:

Insert in section 3, line 16, after the word "fixed," the following:

Which shall have suitable covers, and be kept closed therewith whenever practicable.

Insert in section 6, line 3, after the word "refuse," the following:

Except for the purpose of disinfecting or deodorizing; and it shall be the duty of the occupant or occupants, owner or owners of any premises on which a privy is located to keep the same, and the contents thereof, disinfected and deodorized at all times.

The following explanation of the bill, contained in a report by the health officer of the District to the Commissioners, renders comment by your committee unnecessary:

HEALTH DEPARTMENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
Washington, December 16, 1896.

GENTLEMEN: Referring to a bill to regulate privies in the District of Columbia (H. R. 9142), I have the honor to submit the following report:

The establishment and maintenance of privies in the District of Columbia is, at present, governed by sections 11 to 16, inclusive, of an ordinance to revise, consolidate, and amend the ordinances of the board of health, to declare what shall be deemed nuisances injurious to health, and to provide for the removal thereof, passed November 19, 1875, legalized by joint resolution of Congress, April 24, 1880, and again by act of August 7, 1894. A copy of the sections referred to is appended hereto. As it is designed that the various laws hereafter passed shall constitute, when taken together, a complete code of sanitary law for the District of Columbia, some of the provisions contained in existing law will be found in the bill now under consideration.

The present law, with the exception of but one or two of its provisions, relates only to the city and its more densely populated suburbs; the proposed law covers in its provisions the entire District.

The bill to regulate privies was drafted in this department when the act to provide for the drainage of lots in the District of Columbia, approved May 19, 1896, was under consideration in Congress and its fate uncertain. The first section of this bill, forbidding the establishment or maintenance of privies, wherever water and sewer facilities are available, was inserted to provide against a possible failure of the act referred to, which was drafted so as to accomplish the same purpose. It should remain in the proposed law to provide against any possible failure of the act of May 19, 1896, to accomplish the abolition of the box-privy nuisance.

Section 2 fixes the location of privies in reference to streets, adjoining lots, buildings, and sources of water supply. The distances from streets and adjoining lots are

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the same as now provided by law; the other distances are not now regulated, this feature of the bill being new.

Sections 3, 4, and 5 are an elaboration of section 12 of the ordinances now in force. The construction of the privy is specified more in detail, the object of the proposed requirements being to prevent soil pollution. Under existing law, the receptacle is set on or in the ground, rendering it impossible to determine whether it be leaky or not, and facilitating the overflow on the surface of the ground.

Sections 6 and 7 are new. The former is designed to prevent the depositing of substances in privies which interfere with cleaning; the latter secures cleanliness of the building itself.

Section 8 is a modification of section 16 of the ordinances now in force, without any new requirement.

Section 9 is an extension of an act of the late city council of the corporation of Washington, of September 13, 1864, which requires privy accommodations for dwellings and tenement houses. The law as proposed merely extends this requirement so as to provide such accommodations for stores, offices, etc.

Section 10 supplies deficiencies in existing law by forbidding the deposit of fecal matter in improper places.

Section 11 is designed merely to secure a record of such persons as may engage in the scavenger business, so as to subject their work to supervision.

Section 12 is intended to secure a record of privies so as to facilitate their inspection. It does not add to their cost, as the permit is to be issued without charge, nor does it authorize further restrictions upon such places than are specified by law.

Section 13 regulates the location and construction of sewage-disposal plants.

The remaining sections refer to the administrative features of the bill.

The proper disposal of the waste of a community, especially of the human excreta, is of prime importance to the public health. The passage of this bill, which will, it is believed, further that purpose, is earnestly recommended.

Very respectfully

WM. C. WOODWARD, M. D.,
Health Officer.

The COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Ordinances as revised, amended, and adopted by the board of health, November 19, 1875.

AN ORDINANCE to revise, consolidate, and amend the ordinances of the board of health, to declare what shall be deemed nuisances injurious to health, and to provide for the removal thereof.

SEC. 11. That all water-closets and privies connected with any house, building, or premises within the District of Columbia, in or upon which people live, or where they congregate or assemble, or any kind of business is done, kept in a filthy and offensive condition, or from which noisome odors and noxious gases arise, and all water-closets located within and being a part of any such house or building not provided with proper sewer traps so as to prevent the return and escape of noxious gases and offensive odors from any public or private sewer connected therewith, are hereby declared nuisances injurious to health; and any person creating, keeping, or maintaining such nuisance shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than five nor more than twenty-five dollars for every such offense.

SEC. 12. That any privy within the cities of Washington or Georgetown, or the more densely populated suburbs of said cities, including Uniontown or Anacostia, and Mount Pleasant, in the District of Columbia, constructed of other material than brick, cement, or wood, or which is not provided with a sufficient box, bucket, or vessel for the reception of filth, and the inside of which is not at least five feet distant from the line of any adjoining lot, and at least two (2) feet distant from any street, lane, alley, camp, square, or public place, or public or private passageway; and any privy so constructed that it can not be conveniently approached and cleaned, or in such manner that each and every vault, box, bucket, or vessel thereof is not made tight and close, so that the contents thereof can not escape therefrom, except as may be permitted by means of a passageway or conduit under ground for the purpose of carrying away the contents of such vault, box, or vessel into any common sewer or drain, is hereby declared a nuisance injurious to health; and any person who shall create, maintain, or continue such nuisance, and shall fail, after due notice from this board, to abate or remedy the same, shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than five nor more than twenty-five dollars for every such offense.

SEC. 13. That fecal matter, not thoroughly deodorized and disinfected, remaining in privies in the District of Columbia is hereby declared a nuisance injurious to health; and the board of health shall, upon the receipt of complaint in writing, cause any privy to be inspected, and, if necessary, cleaned by the person authorized

for said purpose; and any person owning or occupying premises on which any privy is situated who shall refuse to permit the same to be inspected and cleaned at the times designated by said board, or whenever necessary, shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than five dollars for every such offense.

SEC. 15. That it shall be unlawful for any person to deposit the contents of any privy in any place other than such as may be approved by this board; and any person so offending shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than five nor more than fifty dollars for every such offense.

SEC. 16. That the system heretofore in use of removing night soil, cleaning privies, privy boxes, vaults, sinks, and cesspools within the cities of Washington and Georgetown, and the more densely populated suburbs of the said cities, by buckets or other process, agitating and exposing the contents thereof in the open air, and of transporting said contents in carts and other vehicles not air-tight through the streets, avenues, alleys, and other public places within said cities, and their said suburbs, is hereby declared a nuisance injurious to health; and that from and after the 15th day of October, A. D. 1873, no part of the contents (except substances not soluble in water) of any privy, privy box, vault, sink, or cesspool within said cities or their said suburbs shall be removed therefrom, nor shall the same be transported through any of the streets, avenues, alleys, or other public places of said cities, or of their said suburbs, except as the same shall be removed and transported by means of some air-tight apparatus, pneumatic or other process, so as to prevent the said contents from being agitated or exposed in the open air during said process of removal or transportation; and any person violating the provisions of this section shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not less than ten nor more than fifty dollars for every such offense.

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